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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 OMB-01
TRSE-00 SY-05 MCT-01 DHA-02 SCS-03 OPR-02 A-01
OC-06 CCO-00 EB-07 ACDA-07 SCA-01 FBO-02 LAB-04
SIL-01 EURE-00 COME-00 /108 W
----------021500Z 094402 /47
O P 021410Z MAY 77
FM AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8756
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL ADANA PRIORITY
AMCONSUL IZMIR

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, ASEC, TU
SUBJECT: MAY DAY VIOLENCE

REF: ISTANBUL 1492

SUMMARY: IN ISTANBUL'S WORST INCIDENT OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN AT LEAST TEN YEARS, SOME 37 PEOPLE WERE KILLED AND 200 WOUNDED AT A MASSIVE MAY 1 LABOR RALLY. WELL-ORCHESTRATED SHOW OF FORCE BY LEFTIST DISK LABOR CONFEDERATION TURNED INTO BLOODBATH WHEN EXTREMIST "MAOIST" GROUPS OPENED FIRE ON GATHERING IN CITY MAIN SQUARE WHERE CROWD ESTIMATED AT MORE THAN 150 THOUSAND QUASI-MILITARY "JANDARMA" TROOPS WERE CALLED IN AND BELATEDLY RESTORED ORDER. CITY APPEARS SURPRISINGLY CALM AS AUTHORITIES PPROMISE EXTENSIVE INVESTIGATION. HOWEVER, LOCAL POLICE EXPECT FURTHER VIOLENCE WHICH COULD OCCUR WHEN FUNERALS TAKE PLACE FOR THOSE KILLED. END SUMMARY.

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1. UNTIL OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE, MAY DAY RALLY ORGANIZED BY LEFTIST REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS UNION CONFEDERATION (DISK) WAS EXTREMELY WELL-ORGANIZED AFFAIR. WITH RIGID DISCIPLINE ENFORCED BY THOUSANDS OF BATON WIELDING DISK PARADE MARSHALLS A CROWD ESTIMATED BETWEEN 150 TO 200 THOUSAND PEOPLE MARCHED INTO ISTANBUL'S MAIN SQUARE (TAKSIM) IN CENTER OF CITY, FILLING IT TO CAPACITY. IN ADDITION TO DISK UNION MEMBERS NUMBER OF LEFTIST PROFESSIONAL GROUPS

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WERE WELL-REPRESENTED AND SOME WORKERS FROM RIVAL TURK-IS CONF-
EDERATION ATTENDED. SINGLE SPEAKER AT MEETING WAS DISK PRESIDENT
KEMAL TURKLER; AND AS HE BEGAN SPEAKING, DELEGATIONS WERE STILL
FILING INTO SQUARE.

2. NEAR END OF TURKLER'S FORTY-FIVE MINUTE SPEECH, TWO EXTREME
LEFTIST, GROUPS WHICH POLICE AND PRESS HAVE LABELLED AS
"MAOISTS", ENTERED TAKSIM FROM OPPOSITTE ENDS OF THE SQUARE.
DISK HAD PREVIOUSLY DENIED THESE GROUPS PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE
IN RALLY. ACCOUNTS VARY FROM THIS POINT ON. POLICE HAD BEEN GIVEN
INSTRUCTIONS NOT TO INTERFERE WITH CONDUCT OF RALLY, BUT DISK
PARADE MARSHALLS MAY HAVE ATTEMPTED TO PREVENT THEIR JOINING
RALLY OR DISK MEMBERS MAY HAVE INITIATED ASSAULT AFTER "MAOISTS"
BEGAN CHANTING OBJECTIONABLE SLOGANS. HOWEVER, MOST OBSERVERS
INCLUDING ONE EYEWITNESS WHO HAD PARTICULARLY GOOD VANTAGE POINT
INFORMED US THAT AFTER "MAOISTS" HAD ENTERED AND WERE WELL INTO
SQUARE THEY SUDDENLY BEGAN FIRING INTO CROWD IN APPARENT PLANNED
PROVOCATION.

3. GUNFIRE STARTED AT APPROXIMATELY 7 P.M. AND LASTED AROUND 45
MINUTES UNDERSTANDABLY, PANIC ENSUED AS THOUSANDS OF MEN AND WOMEN
ATTEMPTED TO VACATE TAKSIM AREA AND AVOID LINE OF FIRE. NUMBER
OF THOSE KILLED WERE APPARENTLY TRAMPLED UNDERFOOT. IMMEDIATELY
AFTER SHOOTING BEGAN QUASI-MILITARY "JANDARMA" TROOPS WHICH WERE
STANDING BY WERE ORDERED INTO AREA AND JANDARMA OFFICER ASSUMED
COMMAND OF MEASURES TO CONTROL VIOLENCE. DURING INITIAL STAGES
OF ATTACK, "MAOIST" GROUP ENGAGED POLICE IN SHOOT-OUT AND ONE
OR TWO POLICEMEN WERE REPORTEDLY KILLED. APPARENTLY, SOME DISK
PARTICIPANTS WELL ARMED. "MAOISTS" GROUP REPORTEDLY NUMBERED
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SEVERAL THOUSAND, AND AFTER SECURITY FORCES MOVED IN FIGHTING CON-
TINUED ON SIDE STREETS. FOR SEVERAL HOURS AFTER ATTACK BEGAN,
THERE WAS SPORADIC FIRING IN VICINITY OF TAKSIM AND SEVERAL
SMALL BOMBS WERE EXPLODED.

4. TOTAL NUMBER OF DEAD AND WOUNDED STILL NOT CONFIRMED BUT BEST
ESTIMATES ARE THAT 34-37 PERSONS WERE KILLED AND ABOUT 200 WOUNDED
IN INCIDENT. AUTHORITIES HAVE ARRESTED 400 PERSONS, AND INVESTI-
GATION, WHICH GOVERNOR ANNOUNCED WILL INCLUDE ROLE OF DISK LEADER-
SHIP AND MAJOR OF ISTANBUL, WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE DRAWN OUT AFFAIR.
ACCORDING TO PRESS, MINISTER OF INTERIOR, MINISTER OF JUSTICE,
COMMANDER OF JANDARMA AND DIRECTOR GENERAL OF SECURITY ARE ALL
COMING TO ISTANBUL TO OBTAIN FIRST-HAND INFORMATION. AFTER
EMERGENCY CABINET MEETING, MINISTER OF INTERIOR ANNOUNCED TO
PRESS THAT SITUATION IN ISTANBUL WAS CALM AND THERE HAD BEEN NO
NEED TO CALL IN REGULAR TROOPS. PRIME MINISTER DEMIREL STATED
THAT IMPOSITION OF MARTIAL LAW IN THE PROVINCE WAS NOT NECESSARY.

5. LOCAL POLICE OFFICIALS TELL US THAT WITH ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN

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PROCESS, THEY DISCOUNT POSSIBILITY OF IMPOSITION OF MARTIAL LAW
AND ARE THEMSELVES GEARING UP TO HANDLE FURTHER SECURITY PROBLEMS
WHIC COULD OCCUR WHEN FUNERALS OF THOSE KILLED TAKE PLACE. IN
ADDITION, THEY EXPECT INCIDENTS LEADING UP TO MAY, ANNIVERSARY OF
DEATH OF TURKISH PEOPLES LIBERATION ARMY TERRORIST DENIZ GEZMIS,
A DATE WHICH IN PAST HAS BEEN MARKED BY TERRORIST BOMBINGS IN CITY.
GIVEN SCALE OF BLOODSHED YESTERDAY ISTANBUL APPEARS SURPRISINGLY
CALM AND AUTHORITIES SEEM IN CONTROL.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, LABOR UNIONS, MAY DAY, CIVIL DISORDERS, DEATHS, CASUALTIES, POLITICAL SITUATION, POLICE FORCES, INVESTIGATIONS, MAOISM
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 02-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ISTANB01503
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770153-0400
Format: TEL
From: ISTANBUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197705104/aaaadmla.tel
Line Count: 125
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d544e287-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 ISTANBUL 1492
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2333700
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MAY DAY VIOLENCE
TAGS: PINT, ASEC, TU, DISK
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d544e287-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009